

BEFORE  
THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF  
SOUTH CAROLINA  
DOCKET NO. 2001-165-S - ORDER NO. 2001-679  
JULY 27, 2001

IN RE: Application of Palmetto Utilities for Approval ) ORDER GRANTING  
of an Increase in its Notification Fee. ) INCREASE IN  
 ) NOTIFICATION FEE

This matter comes before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (the Commission) on the request of Palmetto Utilities, Inc. (Palmetto or the Company) for approval of an increase in Certified Letter Notification Fee for the Company's delinquent customers.

26 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-535-1 (1976)(Supp. 2000) requires that a 30 day notice be given prior to discontinuance of service to a delinquent customer, and that this notice be given by certified mail. If a second notice is necessary, then it also must be provided by certified mail. As justification for its request, Palmetto states that there has been an increase in postage by the US Postal Service for Certified/Return Receipt mailings from \$2.98 to \$3.74, and the Company's volume of delinquent customers has increased. During the year 2000, Palmetto states that the average monthly certified notices sent to its delinquent customers were 86, compared to the monthly average of 121 thus far in the year 2001. Palmetto further states that the certified/return receipt process for sending notices is very time consuming, and due to the increase in volume of these mailings, the Company will begin using a preprinted form with the return receipt

attached. Palmetto adds that there will be a cost of approximately \$3,500.00 per 5000 for the preprinted forms. Currently the Company's fee assessed for postage to its delinquent customers is \$15.00, and Palmetto requests that the Company be allowed to increase this fee to \$25.00 in order to cover the Company's cost.

Pursuant to the instructions of the Commission's Executive Director, Palmetto published a Notice of Filing, one time, in a newspaper of general circulation in the utility's affected service area. The Notice of Filing indicated the nature of the Company's Application, and advised all interested parties of the manner and time in which to file appropriate pleadings. Proof of the publication was filed by Palmetto, and no Protests or Petitions to Intervene were filed.

Accordingly, the Commission grants a waiver of hearing and an approval of the increase in notification fees as described above. S.C. Code Ann. Section 58-5-240 (G) (Supp. 2000) states that the Commission may allow rates or tariffs to be put into effect without a hearing upon Order of this Commission when such rates or tariffs do not require a determination of the entire rate structure and overall rate of return. We hold that the proposed increase in notification fees fits into this category, since we do not have to determine the entire rate structure or overall rate of return to consider the proposed increase. We may therefore rule without a hearing.

Upon consideration of this request, the Commission finds that the proposed increase in notification fees is fair and reasonable, and should be approved as filed, since the increase is necessary to cover the Company's cost.

This Order shall remain in full force and effect until further Order of the Commission.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION:

  
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Chairman

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Director

(SEAL)